4: Baldus E-5 (1934) 1944 SK7 Guana SK7
Terena

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The Succession of the Chiefs among the Terena
[Die Erbfolge der Häuptlinge bei den Tereno]

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Stuttgart: 1944
Ethnologischer Anzeiger
Vol. 4, Part II, pp. 38-42

Translated from the German by Shelton Hicock

Human Relations Area Files
1966

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121 Not much has been known up to now about the social position
191 of the South American chief and its effect on marriage and succession. Most observers of the hunters and gatherers and the "lower" agriculturalists are content to describe him as primus inter pares whose authority could grow to decisive importance only in war and extraordinary situations. But in the case of some Indians, for instance, the nomadic gathering and hunting people of the Tschamakoko /Chamacoco/ and the sedentary agricultural tribe of the Kaskihá (1), we are familiar with the basic

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1. Cf. H. Baldus, Indianerstudien im nordöstlichen Chaco /Indian Studies in the Northeast Chaco/, Leipzig, 1931 (Publ. C. L. Hirschfeld), pp. 69f., 73.

difference that among them the common man practices following the wife /Gattinnenfolge/, whereas the wife of a chief or his eldest son moves to the place of her father-in-law or husband upon marrying. Furthermore, I was able to observe among the hunting peoples of the Tschamakoko and Bororo that they, as we also know, for example, for the Guaykurú, seem to believe in a "nobler blood" of the chiefs and because of this in their right to a preferential position.

622 I did not have an opportunity for a more thorough study of the
121 marriage and succession of the chiefs until February, 1934,
101 among the Tereno /Terena/ living not far from Miranda in the
177 southern part of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. Although
178 this Arawak tribe probably has had peaceful contacts with whites since the middle of the seventeenth century, contacts which without doubt have become increasingly close, since the middle of the previous century, /39/ it has nevertheless preserved, besides its language, certain arrangements of its social organization.

161 The Tereno, whose number according to various reports has
241 varied between two thousand to four thousand individuals for
361 more than a hundred years, have carried on agriculture from

161 /39 cont./
241 time immemorial and are concentrated in village communities,
361 of which there are eleven at present. I have the chief of the
415 village of Mureira, whom the Brazilians call José Correia, to
[622] thank for the following information. His Tereno name was at
[551] first Kalpetí, which means "left-hander," but it has only the
significance of a name, so it was a coincidence when José
553 actually became a left-hander later. An old man who is a close
602 relative of the mother or the father gives the name immediately
after the birth. When José's mother died, an old relative of his
[768] father gave him a new name: Nakilí. That is, if one of the
parents dies, all the children of the family receive different
names so that the surviving parent will not be reminded of the past
by their previous names and become sad. If the surviving parent
dies, the names of his children are not changed again. The
names of other persons, for example, of the widower or widow,
remain unchanged after a death.
775 The spouses find each other again after death and then re-
829 main together. My informant, who is a widower, says:
I still have the hope of meeting my wife in the next world. -- I
ask how the next world looks. -- He says: The next world is
764 like here. Formerly the deceased was thrown into the water or,
725 when that was not possible, burned. When one was dead, noth-
ing came out of him; only the intestinal worm came out, if it
had been the sickness. In the water the deceased again becomes
an animal. He was an animal before he was a Tereno. The
burned one also becomes an animal, When the animal dies, it
goes on living in the next world. The next world is under the
earth. My life never stops completely.
843 Long before the birth the father and mother do not eat the
armadillo, the small ant bear, or the fruit of the araxikú, be-
cause otherwise the child would die in the mother's body and not
846 come out. They practice the same avoidances after birth, too,
and lie down in connection with it. The mother lies down for a
long time; the father, however, now lies down for only two or
three days; formerly it was five days.

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842 There is no rule as to whether births of boys are preferred to births of girls or vice versa; such a preference depends on individual taste.

584 If a boy is courting a girl, he makes a speech to her, which one can translate approximately as follows: "I wish, I love this woman, I would like to be married, I wish, I wish, I love." -- If the girl is in agreement with him, she declares, short and sweet: "I want to." -- Then the mother of the boy goes to the mother of the girl to ask for her, and the father of the boy goes to the father of the girl. The boy gives his parents-in-laws gifts, 836 and they respond with gifts. Pre-marital sexual intercourse does 585 not take place. When the marriage is to be consumated, the 833 future husband hears from his father, and the future wife from her mother, that for coitus one should lie on the side, and, indeed, /40/ facing each other. "First you must do it that way for it has been done that way since the beginning of the tribes; later you may do it as you please."

842 If there are not to be children immediately, the woman takes [825] a preventive: she roasts a certain snail, places the juice of it [824] in the morning dew, and drinks it very early in the morning. For the same purpose, she can also eat a certain small forest-fruit, which smells like the abacaxy (therefore like a pineapple), but only when it is ripe.

578 Formerly there were no quarrels between man and man, man 178 and woman, or woman and woman because of jealousy; today they do occur.

461 There are women who are lazy. Then the man does her work. But there are also men who are lazy and have their work done by the woman.

115 I have my informant, who first was called Kalapití and later [126] Nakilí, to thank for a few texts of myths which I surely could [114] not have learned from any other Tereno. I shall publish them at another place. I also have him to thank for the information concerning the succession of the chiefs, which without doubt no other Tereno could have given me so thoroughly and completely. For

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115 [648] Nakilí is nearly 90 years old. He has deep scars on his head from the Paraguay War, and he tells me how he then, that is, 1865, fought as a youth of about 20 against the Paraguayan soldiers. Now he is a vigorous old man of tall, slender build, with a full head of hair in which only a few strands of gray are to be seen, with a white mustache and even a chin beard, with good incisors in his lower jaw and some molars, with narrow, sunken eyes in his rather long, nobly formed, yellow-brown face, with a pleasantly cool, dry hand, with holiday-like new and clean, bright-colored shirt, trousers, and gigantic straw hat, with a slow, but youthfully erect gait. He is very modest, but not without a sensitive feeling of self-reliance; he is extremely polite, tactfully reserved, and quietly cordial. His mental alertness and, above all, his readiness to help were demonstrated by the fact that he tried to answer exhaustively my most peculiar questions in every direction from seven in the morning to five o'clock in the afternoon; to be sure, after a few days he gave me an explanation which could be translated with "my head is far away," and which was said to mean "I have a headache."

622 361 643 179 Every village has its chief. Before the Paraguay War there were eight villages. A high chief stood over all. His family /Geschlecht/ has died out. "Would it not have been well to choose a new one?" I ask. -- "Yes," says Nalikí /sic/, "but no one ever thought of it."

595 611 602 604 The Tereno live in monogamy. The children belong to the kin group /Verwandtschaft/ of the father. The maternal relatives (1) are not without importance, however, for often the

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1. "My father's father," as well as "my mother's father," is called ootú; "my father's mother," as well as my mother's mother," ooté; "my father's brother," as well as "my mother's brother," lulú; "my father's sister," as well as "my mother's sister," ōngó; "my father's brother's son," "my father's brother's daughter," "my

/40 cont./

602 1. (cont.)
601 mother's brother's son," and "my mother's
brother's daughter," nevoangé. -- In my
[114] work Tereno-Texte /Tereno Texts/ I shall
publish all the kinship terms of the Tereno.

602 father's father of the children tells their mother's brother that
604 he should /41/ bring back from hunting something for them that
[178] they especially desire. It was like that formerly and it is often
[593] that way still today. The father only provides the ordinary foods
for his children, but not particularly desired delicacies.
582 While the people always marry within the village and the
621 husband builds the house for his wife and she becomes the mistress
622 of the house, chief's children only marry among themselves or,
591 when that is impossible, at least distant relatives of chiefs (1), and

[602] 1. Kinship extends to the grandchildren of the
[601] male and female cousins, whom one also calls
amorí, "my grandchild."

thus they marry outside the village and it is not infrequent that
622 the husband moves to his father-in-law's place. Nalikí's mother s
602 father was chief of the village of Mureira even before the Paraguay
War. He was called Himuná. His successor was Nalikí's father,
who was called Ečviagatí. He was the oldest son of the chief of
Abacaxí. Usually the eldest son of the chief becomes his father's
successor, if he does not have father's brother's sons who are older
[591] (see below). Since however, all of Himuna's sons had died and
left no male descendants, since Himuná also had no brother's
sons or sister's sons, and since Ečviagatí's father was still very
vigorous, Ečviagatí, as husband of Himuná's oldest daughter,
moved to his father-in-law's and later became chief of Mureira
as his successor; he handed over the rule of Abacaxí to his
younger brother after his father's death.

602/41 cont./
622 When Ečiviagatí died about 1925, Nalikí, as his eldest son and the oldest of his brother's sons, became chief of Mureira. Nalikí was therefore already 80 years old then. He had two sons
122 and two daughters. The eldest son is married to a daughter of
59/ the chief of Passarinho and lives with his father in Mureira (but
602 in his own hut). The second son is married to a daughter of the chief of Cachoeirinha and also lives with his father in Mureira. The oldest daughter was married to the eldest son of the chief of Lalima and died in childbirth. The second daughter also lives in Lalima; she is married to the second son of the chief there.

622 The order of succession of the Tereno chiefs is the following:
602 1. The oldest among the chief's sons and his brother's sons.
2. The oldest among the sons and brother's sons of No. 1 (that is, either the oldest among the chief's son's sons or the son's sons of one of his brothers).
3. The oldest among the chief s sister's sons.
4. The husband of the oldest daughter of the chief.
5. The oldest among the sons of the oldest daughter of the chief.
6. The husband of the oldest daughter of No. 1, that is, of the oldest among the chief's sons and his brother's sons.
7. The next oldest brother of the chief.
8. The husband of the oldest among the chief's brother's daughters.
9. The husband of the oldest sister of the chief.
10. The husband of the oldest among the chief's sister s daughters.

/42/ According to what has been said, it seems that one may assume that if the chief has no descendants and siblings, the succession does not fall to the relatives of his wife, but to the oldest brother of his father and his descendants or, if such a one does not exist, to the husband of the oldest sister of his father and his descendants. I could not find out anything about this, however.

The following presentation, in which in any given case the oldest, and thus the legitimate individual to succeed, is always indicated, may serve as an example to clarify the order of succession:

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622 Thus the oldest among the sons and brother's sons usually
602 takes over the succession. If, as in the case of Ečiviagatí, he gives up this succession during the chief's lifetime in order to become the successor of his father-in-law who has been left without male heirs, the next oldest brother or brother's son inherits the rule. It has also occurred that the father-in-law had no male heirs and the father just one. Then the latter, after the death of the two, took over the rule of both villages until his oldest son married and then became chief of one of the two villages, usually the village of his mother's father.

622 The other sons are usually free after their marriage to live in
59 the village of the father or of the father-in-law. It is only
602 necessary or desirable that they move to the place of the father-in-law if the latter is without male heirs and they have married his oldest daughter.

622 If a chief, at his death, leaves only minor sons, brother's sons,
429 son's sons, brother's son's sons, and sister's sons, the husband of
602 his oldest daughter or granddaughter, or, when no married daughters or granddaughters are present, the husband of his oldest sister takes over the succession until the marriage of the heir of the deceased chief. Only when no daughter, granddaughter, or sister is married can the next oldest brother rule until the marriage of the heir.

622 The characteristic thing about the order of succession of the
605 Tereno chiefs is in any case the equal position of the chief's sons
602 and his brother's sons as far as the right of the oldest among them to the succession.